

Parliamentary Bills re BESS Safety

1.1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. Anna Sabine (MP) is championing a Parliamentary Bill¹ to make fire and rescue authorities statutory consultees for planning applications relating to Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS); and for connected purposes. The second reading of this Bill is due on 11th July 2025.
- 1.1.2. Lord Redesdale is championing a Parliamentary Bill² to make provision regarding the safe storage, use and disposal of lithium-ion batteries; and for connected purposes, which is at the Committee Stage in the House of Lords.
- 1.1.3. Neither Bill provides confidence that the safety of communities is paramount, especially given the number of BESS planning applications, both proposed and approved nationwide, and the widespread community concerns about fire and toxic fumes.
- 1.1.4. Much has been reported about the tendency for BESS sites to ignite, including [this article](#) from CPRE³, which highlights the potential risks of fire and thermal runaway. Planning applications, [such as this one](#)⁴, and [this one](#)⁵, have been refused due to the perceived fire risk. This [Significant Incident Report](#)⁶ highlights the risks to fire service staff and covers a fire in Liverpool (2020) that burned for 59 hours. There have been at least two other BESS related fire incidents in the UK and many more in other countries.
- 1.1.5. Whilst paragraph 213 of the [Energy Act \(2023\)](#)⁷ specifically mentions Electricity Storage, a [parliamentary research briefing](#)⁸ confirms that there are currently “*no laws that govern the safety of BESSs specifically*” and that the government is undertaking a [review of batteries regulations](#)⁹. As part of that review, the government is considering the “*safety risks associated with all batteries*”. I assume this is related to Lord Redesdale’s Bill.
- 1.1.6. New guidance is also awaited from the National Fire Chiefs Council¹⁰.

1.2. Request for Amendments to be proposed

- 1.2.1. Please can you take the opportunity to encourage that these Bills:
 - do more to secure the safety of your communities and that the risks associated with these schemes are significantly reduced

¹ <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3806>

² <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3742>

³ <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/news/are-battery-energy-storage-systems-bess-safe/>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2kxxzkz335o>

⁵ <https://www.lincolnshirelive.co.uk/news/lincoln-news/battery-storage-system-refused-over-9769626>

⁶ https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/a_copy_of_the_fire_incident_repo/response/2075510/attach/html/5/Significant%20Incident%20Report%20Final%20redacted.pdf.html

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/52/section/213>

⁸ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7621/>

⁹ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-25/182649>

¹⁰ <https://nfcc.org.uk/consultation/draft-grid-scale-energy-storage-system-planning-guidance/>

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- introduce policy guidance and regulations to ensure that community safety is paramount (including, for example, that these schemes should not be sited within a certain distance of residential properties, nor should they be near to (or down wind of) schools or businesses, such as hospitality venues that host large groups of people, that alarms/sirens must be installed to warn communities of incidents, and that detailed guidance is regularly issued to residents advising them of the action to take in the event of a fire – should they stay in, for example, and close their windows, or should they evacuate as quickly as possible)
- introduce compensation for affected communities and businesses that suffer from increased industrialisation, an overwhelmingly high built environment, noise pollution and increased risks from fire and toxic fumes and subsequent water contamination
- introduce specific requirements in relation to the impact of noise pollution on birds and wildlife
- require evidence of need, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework¹¹ (paragraph 32), including the market signals showing evidence of need given the capacity that is now available on the grid¹² and the wait times for connection (as evidenced by the Planning Application appeal¹³ which states that “*any projects trying to connect to Daines substation in Carrington are now only being offered connections by 2037*”)
- all planning applications should incorporate sufficient information about the risks associated with the development, in accordance with the [Gunning Principles](#)¹⁴ (principle 2 requires that there is sufficient information to give ‘intelligent consideration’ to an issue)
- introduces principles similar to those set out in the Green Claims Code¹⁵ as a key requirement of BESS policies. A BESS in Trafford has been approved on 19.9 hectares of very deep peat, for example, which will result in a huge carbon emissions event that negates the net zero benefits of the scheme. The principles would require that, for environmental or ecological assertions made in any planning related document:
 - claims must be truthful and accurate
 - claims must be clear and unambiguous
 - claims must not omit or hide important relevant information
 - comparisons must be fair and meaningful
 - claims must consider the full life cycle of the product or service [a BESS, for example]
 - claims must be substantiated.

1.2.2. A clear monitoring regime should also be put in place, making it a requirement for all policies to be fully monitored (including those related to fire service and water capacity in the area).

¹¹ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

¹² <https://www.energy-storage.news/uk-reaches-over-120gwh-of-approved-grid-scale-battery-storage-projects/>

¹³ <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewDocument.aspx?fileid=59503961>

¹⁴ <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/The%20Gunning%20Principles.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-code-making-environmental-claims/environmental-claims-on-goods-and-services>